

IN THE CLAIMS

*The status of the claims as presently amended is as follows:*

1-21. (Cancelled)

22. (Currently Amended) An image printing system according to claim 25, ~~having a plurality of image output apparatuses, each apparatus having an input element for inputting image data, an instruction element for instructing by an operator to print out[;], and a printing element for printing out image data using a printing device, comprising:~~

~~assigning element for assigning the image data to the printing device of at least one of the image output apparatuses, where~~ wherein the assigning element preferentially assigns the image data to be printed to the printing device that has printed out the least number of image data among the printing devices.

23. (Currently Amended) An image printing system according to claim 25, ~~having a plurality of image output apparatuses, each apparatus having an input element for inputting image data, an instruction element for instructing by an operator to print out, and a printing element for printing out image data using a printing device, comprising:~~

~~an assigning element for assigning the image data to the printing device of at least one of the image output apparatuses, where~~ wherein the assigning element assigns the same image data to the same printing device.

24. (Currently Amended) An image printing system according to claim 25, ~~having a plurality of image output apparatuses, each apparatus having an input element for inputting image data, an instruction element for instructing by an operator to print out, and a printing element for printing out image data using a printing device, comprising:~~

~~an assigning element for assigning the image data to the printing device of at least one of the image output apparatuses, where~~ wherein the assigning element assigns a smaller percentage of image data to a certain printing device than to other printing devices.

25. (Currently Amended) An image printing system having a plurality of image output apparatuses, each apparatus having an input element for inputting image data, an instruction

element for instructing by an operator to print out, a printing element for printing out image data using a printing device, and removal opening corresponding to the printing device, comprising:

an assigning element for assigning the image data to the printing device of at least one of the image output apparatuses; and

a printed item conveying device for conveying printed items to ~~a predetermined~~ the removal opening of the image output apparatus instructed by the operator.

26. (Currently Amended) An image printing system according to claim 25, further comprising a removal-opening open close element for opening an open and close flap of the ~~predetermined removal opening of the image output apparatus instructed by the operator~~ and closing those of all other removal openings.

27. (Currently Amended) An image output method performed by an image printing system having a plurality of image output apparatuses, each apparatus having an input element for inputting image data, an instruction element for instructing by an operator to print out, a printing element for printing out image data using a printing device, and a removal opening corresponding to the printing device, comprising:

assigning the image data to the printing devices of at least one of the image output apparatuses; and

conveying printed items to ~~a predetermined~~ the removal opening of the image output apparatus instructed by the operator ~~among the removal openings.~~

28-42. (Cancelled)

43. (Previously Presented) A recording medium on which is recorded a program which causes a computer to function as ~~the~~ an image printing system, ~~according to claim 25,~~ having a plurality of image output apparatuses, each apparatus having an input element for inputting image data, an instruction element for instructing by an operator to print out, a printing element for printing out image data using a printing device, and removal opening corresponding to the printing device, wherein the image printing system comprises:

an assigning element for assigning the image data to the printing device of at least one of the image output apparatuses; and

a printed item conveying device for conveying printed items to the removal opening of the image output apparatus instructed by the operator.